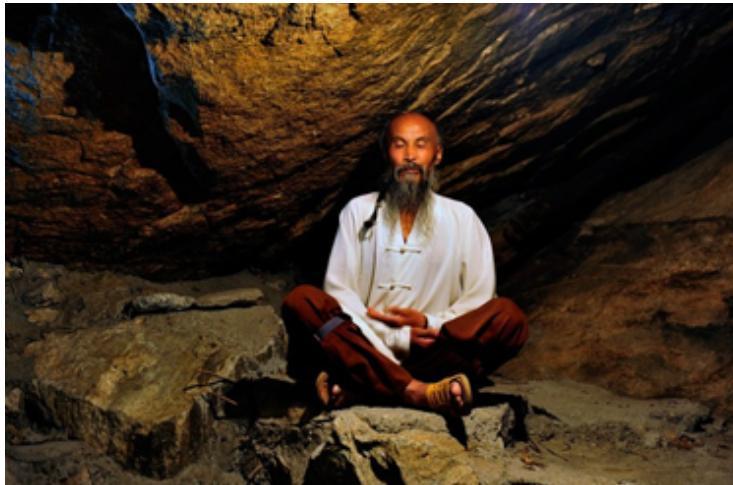


TAOIST INNER ALCHEMY TALKS by AJAHN PANYO
Darkness, The Sealing Of The Five Senses and Floatation:
Fusing The Five Senses Into One Powerful Sixth Sense
through Sensory Deprivation. Article By Ajahn Panyo.



All of the world's spiritual traditions have employed some form of Sensory Deprivation. Sensory Deprivation means to deliberately decrease or to cut off the information that reaches our senses. The first level of Sensory Deprivation is about cutting off the influx of sense data from the outside world, so that we can turn our senses inward. This level begins with closing our eyes, like

in meditation or sleeping, or shielding off the light like in a Darkness Space or in a Floatation Tank. Our Eyes are the 'captains' of the body, and once our eyes have been turned inward our Senses of Taste (Tongue), Touch (Skin), Smell (Nose) and Hearing (Ears) may follow. On the Way of the Tao we learn about this in an early stage of our practice: The Six Healing Sounds, where we will first close our Eyes and look into our body, then connect each of our senses to their respective organs and literally look into our Liver, taste our Heart, touch our Stomach, smell our Lungs and listen to our Kidneys.

When all our five senses have thus been turned inward, the second level of Sensory Deprivation commences: the Sealing of the Five Senses, which means to fuse the five senses into one powerful sixth sense. This Advanced Alchemical Formula thus leads us into the Realm of the Soul, taking the first steps on the Path of Returning to our Origin, the Spirit. It is the preparation for the Sublime Marriage of the Soul with the Spirit, which, once consummated, will enable us to return to our origin amongst the Stars.

In the Tao Teh Ching, verse 12, it says:

wu se ling ren mu mang; wu yin ling ren er long; wu we ling ren kou shuang;
The five colors blind the eye. The five tones deafen the ear.
The five flavors dull the taste.
Racing and hunting madden the Heart.
Pursuing what is rare makes action deceitful.

What is meant by this? Why do the Five Colors blind our Eye? The Five Colors show us the outside of things, but also hide the thing itself. They can make us get stuck with looking for information from outside so that we forget to see with our Inner Eye. The Five Tones deafen our Ear. They hide what there is to hear, so we listen intensely, yet we cannot hear what is there. The Five Flavors dull our Taste, so that we indulge in flavor, but do not taste our food. In stead of searching after the colors, tones or flavors, which -apparently- do not give us access to the true nature of things, Lao Tzu tells us to search for something else, more real than the mere appearance of things and more worthwhile: the Tao itself. In addition to seeing, hearing and taste, the Grand Master also brings the sense of touch into play ; in verse 14 of the Tao Teh Ching we read:

Look, it cannot be seen - it is beyond form.

Listen, it cannot be heard - it is beyond sound.

Grasp, it cannot be held - it is intangible.

These three are indefinable; Therefore they are joined in one.

From above it is not bright; From below it is not dark:

An unbroken thread beyond description. It returns to nothingness.

The form of the formless, The image of the image less,

It is called indefinable and beyond imagination.

Stand before it and there is no beginning. Follow it and there is no end.

Stay with the ancient Tao, Move with the present.

Knowing the ancient beginning is the essence of Tao.

The Tao is the real thing. It cannot be seen, because it is beyond form, it cannot be heard, because it is beyond sound, and it cannot be grasped, because it is intangible. Our senses then, are withholding from us the true nature of existence and lead us into confusion and distraction instead. Moreover Vision, Hearing, Touch, Smell and Taste on their wanton quest for sense data, have sometimes been referred to as "The Five Thieves", because they deplete our energy if not controlled. From the perspective of various mystical traditions the prime condition for any kind of spiritual practice thus is to quiet our senses, to turn them inward and to perceive reality through the Heart itself. This interpretation is affirmed by the Mawangdui Text, a version of the Tao Teh Ching which was found by Chinese archeologists in 1973, in a Tomb at the village of Mawangdui in Hunan province, dating from 168 BC. It says:

Five colors blind the eyes.

Racing and hunting madden the Heart.

Pursuing what is rare makes action deceitful.

Five flavors dull the palate. Five tones deafen the ears.

Though the Mawangdui text is not older or more original than the standard text, it adds something to our understanding of the Tao Teh Ching, because it puts practice before rationality when it places the Heart at the center of the verse and thus asserts the position of the Heart as the center of the body and as the center of action.

Our five senses connect to the Heart. Every time we see something new or desirable, our Heart is affected by it. If our Heart is protected from the stimuli of the senses, we can experience the deep meditation that leads to compassion and our insights and actions will bear more fruit. A good minded, compassionate Heart connects to the Earth and nourishes it. When the Wood meets the Earth, the Wood will grow. When the Water meets the Earth, the Water will gather. When the Metal meets the Earth, the Metal will condense. When the Fire meets the Earth, the Fire will tone down.

To make our senses stronger, then, and to seal them with external and internal force, is the way to accumulate more energy and protect our Heart from maddening at the same time. To refrain from comparing our achievements with those of others, protects the Heart from deceit. To practice compassion and bringing good intention to the earth, protects your health, wealth and community, and brings good results to your projects, because the Earth will bounce everything back to you. Once our five senses are tuned into harmony and our Heart is radiating compassion, development of the Sixth Sense may begin. Our Heart, being the central organ of the body, is also considered the Seat of the Soul. In Chinese the Soul, or Spirit, of the Heart is called 神 Shen. It is the spark of Cosmic Fire that took up residence inside our Heart at our birth, when the Ching or sexual essence of our Mother and Father, the Yin and the Yang, came together. 神 Shen is the essence of the universe itself and as such ever the center of the Macrocosmos; taking its place in the center of the microcosmic world of our body, it is also the connection back to the source. The indwelling of 神 Shen in the Heart is the first emanation of the Heavenly Spirit, which attracts the 魂Hun-spirit, the incarnated Soul or Human Spirit, to form a union with the 意Yi, the Spirit of the Earth, the product of which is our Body. The next emanation or in-carnation, literally: to come into the flesh, is the 魄 Po Spirit, which pertains to the realm of survival and reproduction, where consciousness is a matter of instinct. The deepest level of the Universal Spirit's descent into Matter is the 志 Zhi, the Spirit of gestation and birth, our ultimate connection to the Yin-Source of existence, 'the mystery within the mystery, the mother of the universe, who is the Door to all Wonders'. (Note that the word 'Matter' comes from the Sanskrit Root Mātri, which means Mother.)

Sealing Of The Five Senses

Our Senses are the openings of the Spirit. If we cannot open and close these openings by will, the Force will constantly leak out and drain our Spirit. Depletion will drive our Spirits out into the world, racing after new experiences and battling with others on the marketplace over what is rare to find, only to be left with nothing but more hunger. Their Spirit lost, emotions take up residence in our organs instead. Anger occupies the mansion of the Hun Spirits, and frustrates the liver; Hate settles in the Heart, restricting the Shen and causing rage; Worry over what may go wrong next, eats at the spleen and starves the Yi spirit; Sadness chases away the Po Spirits and depresses the lungs; Fear distills itself in the kidneys, drying out the Zhi Spirits. Our original Spirit, Shen, has only one last refuge: the brain. Given over to cunningness instead of truth, the Heart then goes mad.

Racing and hunting madden the Heart.
Pursuing what is rare makes action deceitful.

Our Spirits of our senses cannot be fulfilled through the outside world. Such says the wisdom of the Tao Teh Ching and with it, all the Mystical traditions of the world. The true fulfillment lies within; it is the Ancient Source of Tao or the Beginning of our Path:

Stay with the ancient Tao, Move with the present.
Knowing the ancient beginning is the essence of Tao.
The Heart.

How can a person know Tao? By the Heart.
How can the Heart know?

By emptiness, the pure attention that unifies being and quietude.

The Heart is never without treasure, yet it is called empty. ...

The Heart is alive and it possesses knowledge, it knows, and from knowing makes distinctions. To make distinctions is to know all parts of the whole at once.

—Ghuang Tzu"

When the Eyes (Green Dragon, East, Wood) are not seeing,
the eternal soul (Hun Spirit) will stay in the Liver.

Turn the Eye Power inward.

When the Ears (Tortoise, North, Water) are not hearing,
the sexual essence stays in the kidneys.

Turn the Ears inward.

When the Tongue (Red Pheasant, South, Fire) is not speaking,
the Shen Spirit stays in the Heart.

Remain Silent.

When the Nose (White Tiger, West, Metal) is not smelling,
the corporal soul (Po) stays in the lungs.

Holding the tongue power inward regulates the breath.

When all Four Forces are not moving, the Four Essences will harmonize at the Spleen (Earth) and will be nourished, strengthened, and sealed. If our Heart is protected from the stimuli of the senses, we can experience the deep meditation that leads to compassion and our insights and actions will bear more fruit. A good minded, compassionate Heart connects to the Earth and nourishes it. When the Wood meets the Earth, the Wood will grow. When the Water meets the Earth, the Water will gather. When the Metal meets the Earth, the Metal will condense. When the Fire meets the Earth, the Fire will tone down.

When all the four essences are not draining out, Ching Chi or Sexual Essence - the Zhi Spirit (Water), the Heart -Shen Spirit (Fire), the Liver -Hun eternal soul (Wood), and the Corporeal Soul -Po (Metal), all will gather at the Earth-point at the tip of the nose. When there is no attachment in the Heart, Fire is not activated, the Green Dragon in the Liver will sound, the Red Pheasant will close its wings, and the Ching Chi stays and gathers. Wood burns to become Fire, and thus gives birth to the Heart energy. The White Tiger (Lung) gives energy to the Water (kidney) which is the life essence (body). If we do not drain out the life essence (take care of our body) the White Tiger will sound, the wind will start to move. The Tortoise will stay dormant, the Sexual Essence will be conserved and stay in. When the Sexual Essence and the Chi stays in us, the Metal, Wood, Water, Fire forces will harmonize together and not leak out.

Fusing The Five Senses Into One Powerful Sixth Sense
Transforming Wood into Thunder,Earth into Mountain,
And Returning the Metal to the Heavenly Spirit

In order to know the world, do not step outside the door.
In order to know the Tao of heaven, do not peer through the window.
The further out you go, the less you know.
So the sage knows without moving, identifies without seeing,
accomplishes without acting.

(translation by Edward Brennan and Tao Huang)

In the book: Door to All Wonders, Application of the Tao Teh Ching, by Master Chia and Tao Huang, it says: "The practice of unifying all perceptual faculties is a practice of unifying the feelings, sensations, inspirations and wisdom into one: one-sense, God-sense, true sense, and pure sense. It is a total and comprehensive body/minded awareness, complete and spontaneous interaction, subtle and penetrative knowing around.

It is comparable to seeing one's entire history from birth to death, encompassing the known and unknown. In high stage meditation practice, the six senses (visual, auditory, smell, taste, touch and thinking) must be united. All aspects of a person, biological, emotional, intellectual and spiritual must be unified into one perception: the combination of original spiritual perception and actual realistic perception. The spiritual perception is the highest form of perceptivity as well as the guiding principle of knowing and understanding. The actual realistic perception we can aspire to is the most reliable and trustworthy perception. The underlying path is the experiential journey: the divine meaning of the wisdom tradition."

The Way of Sealing of the Five Senses thus leads into the mystery of Alchemical transmutation: Staying inside ourselves, transforming our emotions into Chi and being able to control the movement of the Chi (Chi Kung), we realize the Thunder Power, which is the power of magic; practicing Stillness, we gather the Earth Force and realize the Mountain Power, which is the power of meditation. Controlling our mind from wandering outside in quest for sense data, we transform the Power of the Metal, and attain to the Heavenly Power. Having thus transformed our Mind, we find Gold. We then ascend the Mountain and present to the Gods.

**Darkness, Vision and Visualization:
Using your Imagination to Fine Tune your Inner Eye
(THIS TEXT ADAPT TO EVENTUAL PROGRAM)**

Once the Five Senses have been sealed and the Sixth Sense has been established in the Heart, we can begin to fine tune our Inner Eye and other

'divine senses'. Simple but effective methods of visualization will be taught throughout the 2008 Darkness Retreats, but especially during the Sealing of the Five Senses Retreatweek. One of the most powerful ways to enhance your meditation skills is through the Fusion Meditation taught by Master Chia. In this higher level of Taoist Alchemy, we will apply the techniques learned in Fusion I-III and Kan & Li I-III as a way to perfect our meditation.

This level involves:

-meditation inside the Central (Thrusting) Channel: -sustained focus on the Pearl -full astral travel and out of body experience -travelling into the past - clairvoyance/audience -cosmic healing -self healing

-sustained concentration and visualization exercises; apart from Fusion techniques, which are very powerful, we may also employ visualization techniques from Theravada or Mahayana Buddhism. Sometimes these are so similar, that one can hardly distinguish the traditions. Meditation on the 'channels and drops' for instance, as practised in Tibetan Buddhism, is very similar to our own Fusion and Kan & Li practice. On the highest levels, where unity is experienced, the traditions must necessarily come together in the same experience, which is life itself.

-visualization practice for achieving one-pointedness (Ekagrata); both Fusion and Buddhist techniques are employed. Once attained, the experience of Supreme Oneness is the portal to Bliss, Health and Longevity, as well as paving the way for a better understanding of our fellow beings and being able to help them forward on the path.

-One pointedness for use in healing: our mindstream becomes like a dot, or a pearl, which can be employed for Healing ourselves and others and cleansing our channels.

Master Mantak Chia believes that Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism may actually go hand in hand, since they share so much of their history. Though most of the teachings at Tao Garden are from Taoism, some of what is taught may in fact be from different sources: Western Science, Shamanism, Buddhism or Yoga. Especially during a darkness retreat, sound becomes very powerful; during the Darkness Retreats 2008 we therefore wish to remain silent during the so-called 'silent hours', and only use our voice when absolutely necessary. This will magnify the power of our voice tremendously while experiencing the world of sound with Chinese Taoist, Tibetan and Sanskrit Mantra's.

Silence, Sound and Mantra.

Using your Vocal Cords to Fine Tune your Body & Brain. Especially during a Darkness Retreat, sound becomes very powerful; during the Darkness Retreats 2007 many people have requested -periods of- complete silence. We therefore wish to remain silent during the so-called 'silent hours', and only use our voice when absolutely necessary. This will magnify the power of our voice tremendously while experiencing the world of sound with Chinese Taoist, Tibetan and Sanskrit Mantra's. Since most of us have a background in English or any other European language, it remains difficult to

grasp the sound-system pertaining to Chinese language, while Sanskrit, which shares a common Indo European origin, comes much nearer to our own language(s).

The Mandala depicted below is the core diagram of the "Chakrasambharam", which means "The Wheel of All Combined" and most likely the origin of the word "Shambhala", which points towards the fact that Tibetan tradition has preserved it within the Tantrik teachings. The mandala is a depiction of the Crown-center, with the cosmic sound Om in the middle and the other 49 sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet circling around it. Interestingly, the mandala is based on the number 8, just like a Ba Gua (also spelled Pa Kua) and, with Zenith and Nadir, of course represents the 10 directions. That makes the visualization of this mandala fairly easy: one simply extends oneself into the 10 directions and meanwhile circles down to the base of the body, yielding the shape of a pyramid. Also the chanting is not complicated: simply the 49 sounds of the Sanskrit Alphabet. Though this mandala is of Indian origin, it makes an interesting challenge in combination with our Taoist practice. Buddhist and Taoist tradition have always gone hand in hand, and if it comes to Taoist Chanting, can hardly be separated.

Chanting is a very powerful practice, especially in a Darkness Retreat. The chanting taught in the 2008 Darkness retreats will thus be simple and clear, yet allowing the participants to get access to both Chinese and Indian as well as Tibetan chanting. In fact, Asian tradition has much more in common than in difference. Chinese chants will include the "Shao Tzai Yen Sho Tien Tzun", the "Shuan Tzi Yow Shuan, Chun Miao Tsi Men" and other chants from the Tao Teh Ching. In addition there will be "Om Ah Hung", Om Mani Padme Hum and other chants from a Buddhist Origin. Singing bowl and bells will be used, but mainly the chanting will be voice only.

Inner Voice

Inner voice is the most sacred spiritual vessel. Without this inner voice, God is not alive, the Tao is not present, and the self is not active. This inner voice expresses and characterizes the beauty, the meaning and the strength of life. It is sometimes silent to the degree that there is no focal point while at other times it is immeasurably powerful. Yet, we often turn a deaf ear to this inner voice, refusing to abide by it or even give it credence. We choose instead to rely on an external world, that of authority and discipline, to define our life as something meaningful, leaving us with confusion and distortion of the true meaning.

**Fig.1.1 When the hands, heart and mind are unified,
the inner voice speaks itself. (from "Door to All Wonders")**

In order to establish a clear relationship with this sacred vessel, the first set of meditation practices in this book begins with finding, restoring and listening to this inner voice in any given crisis. The exercises are:

1. Listen intently to the sound of silence: a combination of spiritual voice and personal voice.
2. Pay attention to the most immediate direction and clear message: the manifestation of your inner voice.
3. Verbalize it inwardly, whether or not it makes sense to you.
4. Name it with no preconceived notion.
5. Meditate upon it as a part of the visionary journey of your life before it actually takes place.
6. Connect your own name with it. See how it conforms to you and your personality.
7. Make it work for you. It is the divine plan and your decision must be made now.

to be continued